

# The Trouble With TANF: Fixing New Mexico's Family Cash Assistance Program

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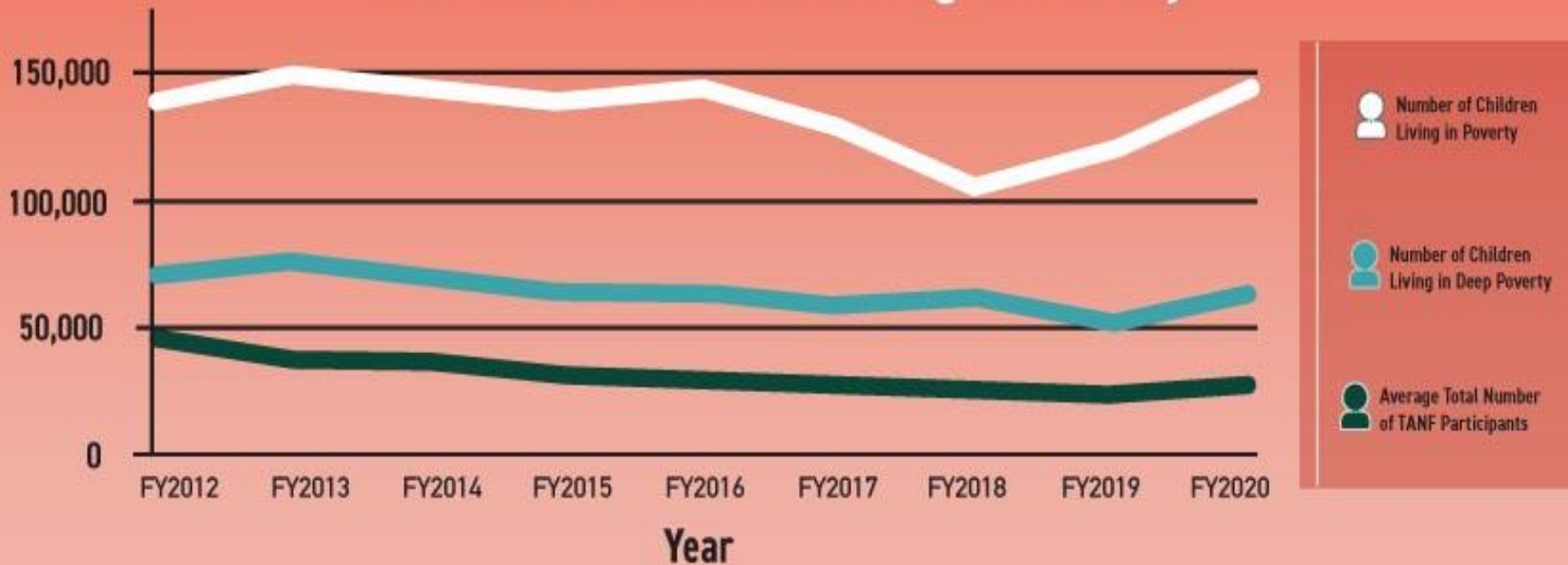
# Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/New Mexico Works

Children are the future of New Mexico but unnecessary and punitive rules in the TANF program stop low-income families from getting the help they need.



# TANF Reaches Very Few NM Children Living in Poverty

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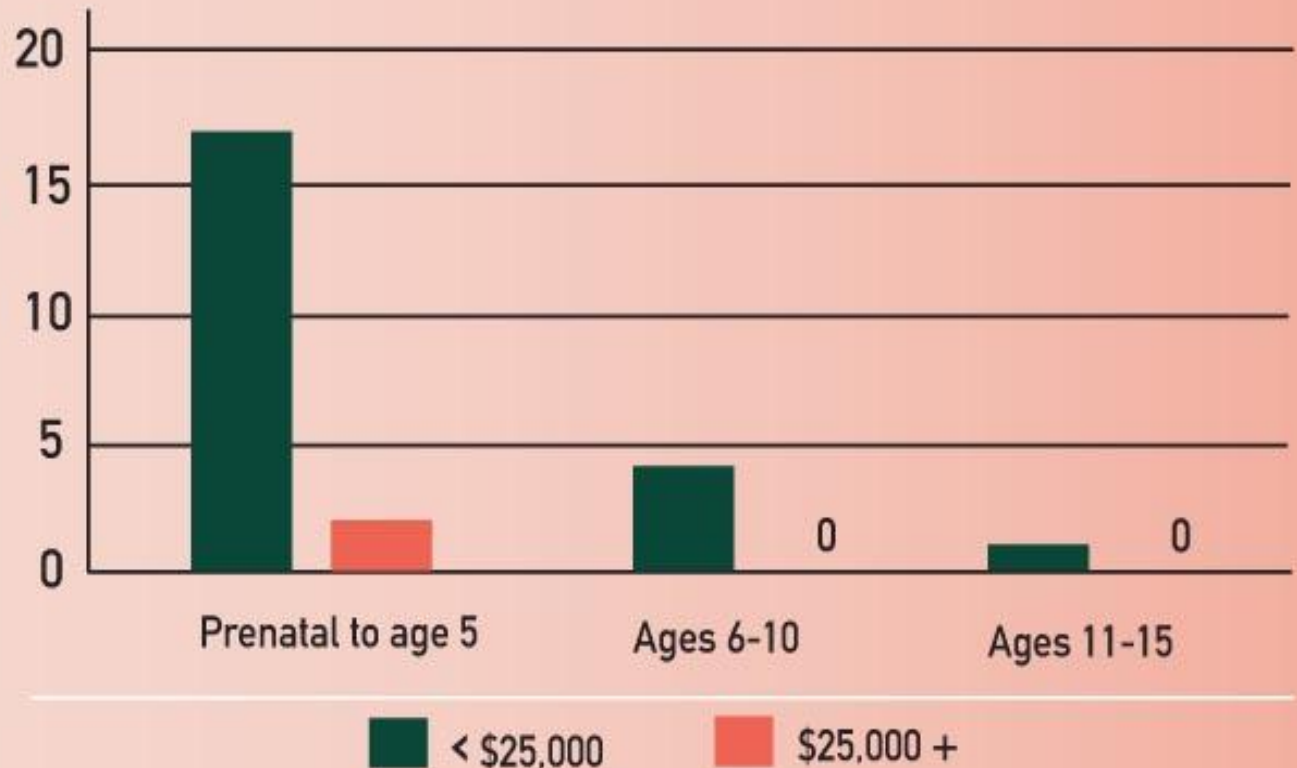


# Small Boosts in Income During Childhood Have Lifelong Impacts

Percentage increase in adult earnings associated with a

**\$3,000**

annual increase in childhood income



# 1. Stop Punishing Children and Babies for Program Violations



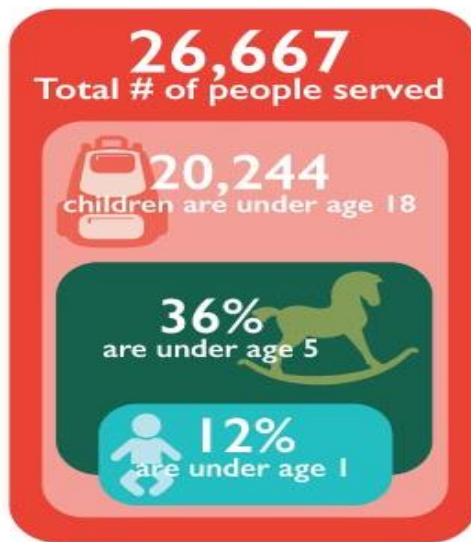
## 2. Restore Exemptions to Work Requirements Required by State Law

Mothers that leave TANF due to sanctions ***are less likely to become employed, and, if employed, have lower earnings than other families leaving welfare.***

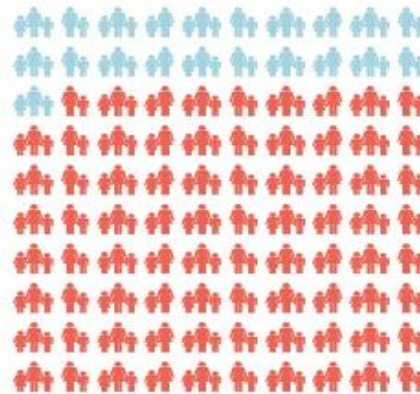
# 3. Increase the Cash Grant, So NM's Children Are Not Living Below Deep Poverty.

## TANF in New Mexico

New Mexico spent roughly **\$33 million** in state dollars on TANF in FY 2019.



As a result of low income eligibility levels and other barriers, just...



...21 out of every 100 families with children and incomes below the poverty level received TANF cash assistance in 2016-2017.

### To be eligible for NMWorks a family must:

- live in New Mexico;
- be below the set income and resource limits;
- have dependent children age 18 or younger who are citizens or have a qualifying immigration status; and,
- provide information on monthly income.

## 4. Provide Flexibility for Families to Meet Program Requirements

- New Mexico allows families **only one** chance a year to avoid a cash benefit reduction for an alleged program violation. Typically, families lose benefits and are locked out of the program for up to 6 months—even if they correct the alleged violation. New Mexico should join other states in providing additional and ongoing opportunities for families to demonstrate compliance with program rules and retain benefits.



# 5. NM Should Stop Retaining ANY Child Support for Families and Exclude Child Support from Cash Benefit Calculation

- Right now, New Mexico collects and keeps all but \$100-\$200 (depending on household size) of child support paid to families who currently participate in TANF. New Mexico should follow Colorado's lead and pass through ***all of the child support funds*** to families and exempt child support from the cash benefit calculation. This would increase the TANF benefit amount by as much as 33% for a single mother of two children. This has been shown to increase compliance with child support payment requirements.

# Our Film: The Trouble with TANF

